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[Occup Ther Health Care](#). 1998;11(2):27-43. doi: 10.1080/J003v11n02_03.

The therapeutic value of the human-animal connection.

[Roenke L](#), [Mulligan S](#).

University of New Hampshire.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics of **pet therapy** which promote positive experiences and health in the elderly. Data were obtained through observations of **pet therapy** sessions, through interviews with a **pet therapy** provider, and residents of a long-term care facility who participated in **pet therapy**, and from the reflections of my (first author) own experiences as a **pet therapy** volunteer. The results revealed four characteristics which contributed to the benefits received by participants: (a) humanness; (b) anticipation and continuity; (c) ability to facilitate reminiscence; and (d) social aspects. The findings supported previous research by providing evidence of the value of pet visitation. In addition, ways in which these four qualities may enhance the physical, cognitive and social-emotional benefits received by nursing home residents participating in **pet therapy** and other activities is discussed.

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